

Instructor and husband give historic

By George P. Yanoshik, Jr.

Linda Ross watched the church across the street dying. She watched as children ran in and out of the abandoned building, waiting for the day an arsonist or wrecking ball would reduce the Victorian Gothic structure to a pile of rubble.

But the Capitol Campus graduate, now teaching graphics here, and her husband, Ken, wouldn't let that happen. The duo combined her design skills, his drafting abilities, and the efforts of architect John deVitry, to transform the 100-year-old Zion Lutheran Church in Marietta from a run-down eyesore to a restored shell housing four condominiums.

After moving to the historic riverfront town, the couple watched the church deteriorate until they ultimately purchased it at a sheriff's sale.

"We went to the sale cold, just out of curiosity," she said, "and ended up buying it, finding only the bank bidding against us."

They took possession of the church in November, 1979, a decade after the last congregation gathered there, and gave a new purpose to the building.

"Our church is only one example of adaptive re-use in the area," Ross said.

"We often see good buildings not serving their functions and I think this is an up-and-coming trend to renovate these structures for other uses."

First attracted to Marietta by its charm and variety of architec-

tural styles, the couple purchased an 1898 Victorian home and began restoring it.

"After we fell in love with Marietta," Ross said, "we found that others shared our love for the town and were very concerned about restoring the buildings there."

The Rosses joined the Marietta Restoration Associates, a group dedicated primarily to preserving the buildings in Marietta, which is approximately 12 miles from campus, along Route 441.

"When we suddenly found ourselves the owners of the church, we really didn't have any immediate plans for it," Ross said.

"In the back of our minds we had thought of the possibility of apartments or even a gallery."

"It would be very easy to just box off four units," she explained, "but then you would lose the interesting features of the church's high Gothic ceilings and windows, the wainscoating, the

unusual woodwork and the like."

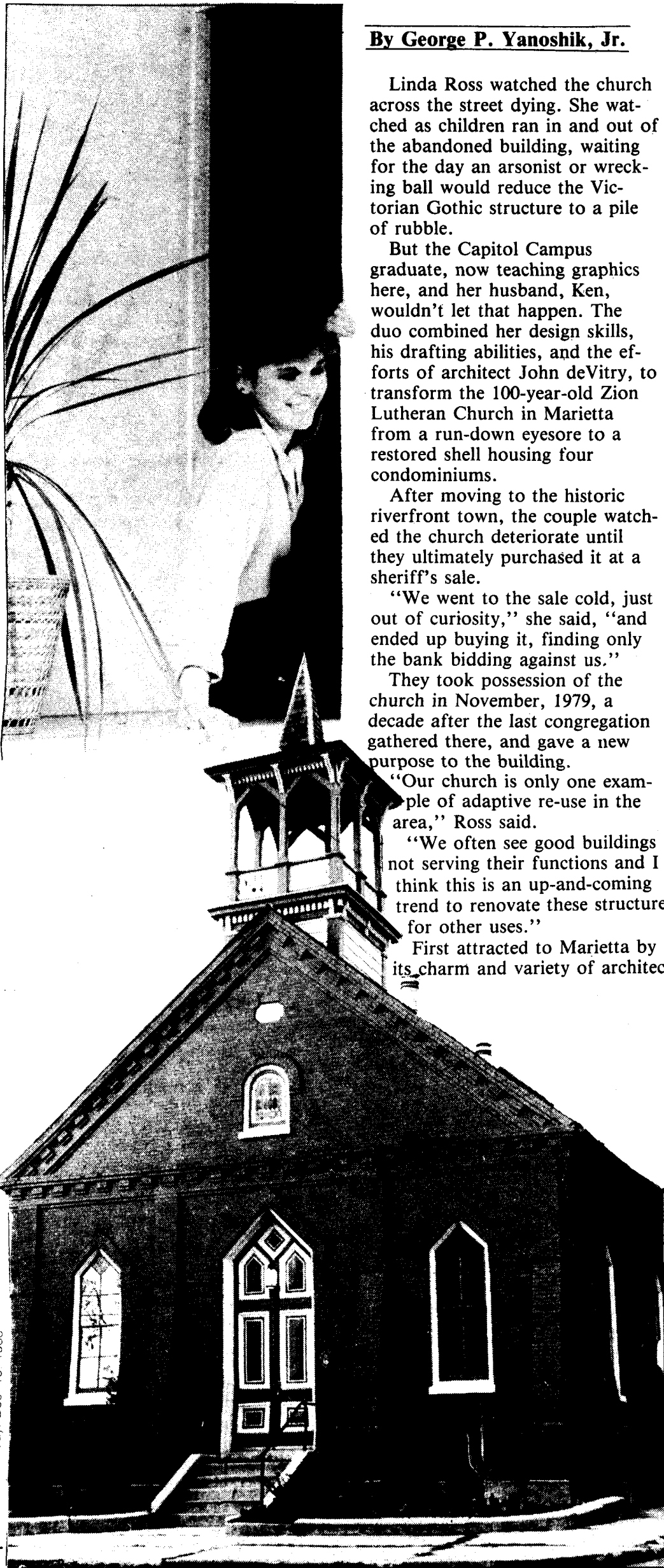
So, the Rosses finally approached deVitry, who had already done similar work in Lancaster, and came up with plans to maintain and enhance what the church already had to offer.

The architect first came up with some rough plans for a gallery and apartments. But zoning ordinances prohibited construction of a gallery, and costs estimates for apartments proved to be too high for the Rosses to gain back money on their initial outlay.

"We realized we would be about 90 years old before we would ever see any return on our investment," she said.

With a desire to respect the existing architecture, keeping as much of what was still there in the church intact, they settled on the idea of condominiums. The money from the sale of one unit would finance the next unit.

Before becoming an instructor of Humanities and Education at Capitol, Ross taught art and ar-



In photo at upper left, Linda Ross looks from opening in nearly completed condominium. Bottom left, exterior view of church. Above, Ken and Linda Ross stand in front of historic church they bought four years ago.